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Word in season to the traders and manufacturers

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A

WORD IN SEASON

TO THE

TRADERS AND MANUFACTURERS

OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

William Combe

SIXTH EDITION.

LONDON, Printed:
EDINBURGH, Reprinted by WILLIAM CREECH.

M,DCC,XCII.

[Price Sixpence.]

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A

WORD IN SEASON, &c.

BEFORE I enter upon the ſubject, the conſideration of which has, for ſome time, employed all my thoughts, it may be proper to inform you, that my life has been paſſed among yourſelves, in the midſt of a flouriſhing, manufacturing country. I was born to competence, which I owe to the ſucceſsful induſtry of my father. In this ſituation I have marked, with a very vigilant attention, the moſt material events which have ariſen ſince I was of an age to conſider them. My education gave me a taſte for literature, and from the tenor of my life, I have had much time for reflection;—and the reſult both of my reading and reflection is an increaſing confirmation of the reverence and attachment I had, at a very early period, conceived for the Britiſh Con-

 ſtitution.

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ſtitution. I well know, that ſome of the wiſeſt authors who have written on the theory of Government, have deſcribed its general principles long before it actually exiſted, as thoſe which, if ever reduced to practice, would lead to the utmoſt poſſible perfection; and they only doubted the poſſibility of realiſing what ſeemed to them beyond the attainment of human wiſdom. My opinion, however, reſts ſtill more on my own obſervation and experience, than on the reſult of any general reaſoning. Through the whole courſe of my life, whatever accidental cauſes may have checked at times the courſe of our proſperity, I have always been ſatisfied that I could trace, even in the midſt of misfortune, the beneficial effects of the ſyſtem under which we live; but they are doubly conſpicuous in ſuch a period as the preſent:—they are manifeſted in the general tranquillity, ſecurity, and order, which have long prevailed throughout the country;—in an enjoyment of the utmoſt degree of political liberty, conſiſtent with the exiſtence of ſociety under any regular government; in the continual encouragement to honeſt induſtry; and in the conſequent increaſe of trade, manufactures, and commerce, which have ever appeared to me principally to promote the individual comfort and happineſs of the great maſs of my countrymen, and to form, at the ſame time, the ſureſt foundation of national wealth and proſperity. My ſurpriſe, therefore, that any attempts ſhould be made to produce diſcontents among the trading, commercial, and manufacturing part of my countrymen, to whom tranquillity and good order are ſo eſſentially requiſite, can only yield to the aſtoniſhment I ſhall feel, if ſuch attempts ſhould find the leaſt ſucceſs among them.

The leiſure of my preſent life qualifies me to conſider, with attention, the means employed to ſow diſcontents among you, as well as the character and views of the perſons who are ſo buſy in employing them; and, for your information,

nation, as well as, I hope, for your conviction and advantage, I have undertaken to offer my opinion of them, and their probable mischievous consequences, to your most serious consideration.

The persons who compose the societies, and who have established them, as they announce the matter, for constitutional reformation, are men, I am not afraid to say, of weak heads, of bad hearts, or desperate fortunes. The first class are certainly the best—who, with good intentions, are persuaded and deceived by artful and wicked men of superior understandings, into a co-operation with them in promoting designs, which, were they to succeed, would give a very deep wound to the happiness of this country.

The second class—consists of persons of considerable talents, who, under the influence of a factious spirit, are engaged in attempts to promote public confusion, in order to realize the dreams of their unprincipled ambition. For, believe me, if these men, or men with the same pernicious dispositions, were, by any violent convulsion of public affairs, to get into power, you would find a woeful difference between these upstart rulers, and your present mild government.

The third class—is composed of the most abandoned characters, who, having dissipated their fortunes in every species of vicious excess, would rejoice in a national disturbance, on the same principle that thieves and pickpockets rejoice at a fire, as it gives them an opportunity of alleviating their distresses by rapine and plunder.

The means which these societies, and the individuals who take the lead in them, employ to promote their wicked and incendiary purposes, though directed ultimately to the same object, vary their course to the attainment of it:—some, with a daring outrage of all decency, with an audacity that seems to tempt the cognizance of the law, hold forth to you

a conduct which would involve you in perſecution, and end in puniſhment;—while others, in the form of ſober reaſoning and diſpaſſionate enquiry, artfully endeavour to undermine and weaken thoſe principles of due ſubmiſſion to Government, which are the great ſupport and ſecurity of national happineſs. ——— I ſhall conſider them both in their order.

The firſt do not heſitate to tell you, that, under your preſent Government, you have no conſtitution, and that the Revolution at the cloſe of the laſt century, (by which you have hitherto been ſo ignorant as to believe, that what you thought an admirable conſtitution, was reſtored and confirmed, and from which period you and your anceſtors have felt yourſelves free and happy), was an artful and tyrannic contrivance to delude the people out of their rights, in order to gratify the ambition of thoſe men who projected and brought it to a concluſion. They will tell you, that all kings muſt be tyrants; and, therefore, a ſcourge to all free governments:—that your Houſe of Lords is the ſervile and abject ſupport of regal tyranny, and ſhould, therefore, be annihilated; and that your Houſe of Commons does not contain an adequate repreſentation of the people; and that, if it did, the Members of it are ſo corrupt, that it cannot repreſent you as it ought; and that, ſuch being the preſent ſtate of the government of this country, the people ought to ariſe as one man, to pull the King from his throne, degrade the nobles from their rank, diſſolve the repreſentative body of the nation, and form a government for themſelves:—and, to add to the inſult they thus offer to your underſtandings as reaſonable beings, they hold forth the Revolution of France as an example for your imitation.

Extreme wickedneſs, very fortunately for mankind, is generally obſerved to outwit itſelf. Thus the men, who broach theſe pernicious doctrines, are ſo blinded by their paſſions,

as to give their miſchief a ſhape, that perverts the end for which it was projected.

As for the bleſſings which the people of England would derive from following the example of France, let us for a moment conſider, by way of recommendation, the actual bleſſings which the French themſelves enjoy, in conſequence of their boaſted Revolution.

Their King is himſelf a captive—in what is called a land of liberty.

Their National Aſſembly is a mob.

Their arrets, their decrees, and their laws, are changed every hour, as the caprice of the moment or the violence of the populace directs.

Their revenue is ſo inadequate to their expenditure, as to demand the ruinous expedient of millions of paper money, which is already 40 per cent. beneath its original value; while their new coin vaniſhes in its paſſage to circulation, becauſe every one hoards up what he can get of it, in a time of ſuch univerſal diſtruſt.

Their army (if an armed rabble can be called ſo) is deſerted by the flower of its officers, and their navy incapable of exertion.

Their ancient nobility is degraded—their clergy pillaged—their commerce almoſt annihilated—and their colonies in a rapid progreſs to ruin.

Property, perſonal ſecurity, liberty, and life, are equally endangered; for neither their laws nor their magiſtrates have ſufficient ſtrength or power, to puniſh theft, robbery, or murder.

The empire, at large, is convulſed and torn to pieces by contending factions, and daily ſtained with blood, from riots, inſurrections, and maſſacres.

To ſupply the deficiency of taxes, the church has been robbed

robbed of its poſſeſſions, and the very altars pilfaged of their ornaments.

Religion, which is formed to ſupport us amidſt the ſorrows of time, and to qualify us for the happineſs of eternity;—Religion, that ſublime principle, which more immediately connects man with his Maker, is now ſubdued in France by the influence of an infidel philoſophy, under the name of univerſal toleration, while perjury is the only road to eccleſiaſtical preferment, and conſcience and piety the certain conductors to poverty, to deriſion, and to contempt.

But theſe, it is ſaid, are only petty evils when compared with the bleſſings which accompany them, and that, after all, the ſubjects of France are a free people.

Yes,—the gentleman of landed property may call himſelf free;—but, at the very moment he is boaſting of his freedom, his caſtle may be ſeized by the banditti of his neighbourhood, and the walls of it ſtained with his blood.

The merchant may boaſt of the fulneſs of liberty; but his warehouſes are empty, his correſpondents are ſilent, his capital is loſt, and his credit is gone.

The tradeſman may ſit in his ſhop, and delight himſelf with the idea that he is a free man—but he ſells nothing.

The artiſt may exclaim—liberty is the friend of genius, the encourager of the arts—but, alas! it has not left him a ſingle patron.

The manufacturer may be elated that his country is bleſſed with freedom;—but the fire blazes no more on his forge, and the uſeleſs loom is occupied by the ſpider's web.

The pious man is grateful for the enjoyment of liberty—but he ſcarce knows where to find an altar, before which he can offer his thankſgiving according to the religion of his fathers.

It is true, indeed, that a great part of the National Aſſembly may juſtly ſay, this liberty is an ineſtimable bleſſing,

for

for we were poor, and it has made us rich—we were almoſt without bread, and it has given us ſumptuous tables—we were forced to obey laws which the authority of government had made for us, and we are now empowered to diſobey thoſe laws which we make for others—we were compelled to ſubmit to every officer of the ſtate, we now make them obedient to our commands, and tread upon the necks of kings.

The members of the popular clubs—thoſe men, for they are of the ſame texure as thoſe we have at home, of weak heads, bad hearts, and deſperate fortunes, may alſo lift up their voices in praiſe of liberty; for it gives the one a ſhadowy importance, which ſatisfies their idiot vanity; it qualifies the others, to gratify their malicious ambition in the contemplation and the ſpoil of ſuperior ruin, and it lifts the reſt from the ſervice of brothels and gaming tables, to the intrigues of a disjointed and falling ſtate.

Such are the comforts of a revolution, which Mr Paine and his adherents recommend to your imitation.—A revolution, which, while it has plunged France into every diſtreſs that can befal a nation, gives a few uncertain, ruinous, and ſhort-lived privileges, to a ſmall band of the moſt worthleſs people in it.—Theſe are the conſequences of a revolution brought on by mad, tumultuous, unreflecting, popular inſurrections, excited and fomented by factious clubs and ſocieties; and who, alone, of twenty-five millions of people, are in any degree the gainers, if gainers they can, with truth, be called, by this general calamity.

If any thing were wanting to enforce theſe conſiderations, it would be the contraſt formed by your own condition. You cannot open your eyes, but you muſt ſee it; you cannot liſten, but you muſt hear it; you cannot reflect a moment, but you muſt feel it. Equally free from the oppoſite extremes of miſery which France has ſucceſſively experienced,

you neither groan under the oppreſſion of arbitrary power, nor tremble at the madneſs and fury of popular confuſion. Your King is neither himſelf in chains, nor does he hold his ſubjects in bondage. With dignity ſufficient to command reſpect, with power ſufficient to enforce obedience, his authority is limited by the law, which is equally binding upon him and upon the meaneſt of his ſubjects.

The ſupreme legiſlative power he holds only in conjunction with the two Houſes of Parliament, and each of the three branches of our government forms an uſeful and ſalutary check on the other.

The Houſe of Lords is compoſed either of an ancient nobility, qualified by rank, education, and property, and inheriting from their anceſtors an attachment to the conſtitution;—or of thoſe ſelected from time to time, from the orders of the church and the law, from the profeſſions of the navy and the army, or from the reſt of the laity, and advanced by the Crown for their piety, their learning, their valour, or their ſervices.

The Houſe of Commons is choſen by the great bulk of the freeholders in counties, and by different cities and boroughs in the kingdom, according to the ſeveral forms which charters or ancient cuſtom has eſtabliſhed. It, therefore, not only repreſents the great maſs of landed property, but it has an immediate connection with property of every deſcription. It conſiſts of a mixture of perſons choſen by the monied and mercantile intereſts—by the manufacturer and mechanic—of thoſe whoſe fortunes have been originally acquired, or are ſtill embarked in trade. From the manner in which the right of election is diſtributed, an opening is offered to every man, who riſes to eminence in his own line, whoſe ſituation makes him reſpectable, or whoſe talents render him uſeful to the public. Hence it is, that even the places which have no immediate and ſeparate repreſentative, can never be

at

at a loſs to find thoſe who have a common intereſt with themſelves.—No part of the country, no corner of the kingdom, feels itſelf neglected or forgotten;—a communication is eſtabliſhed through all the claſſes of ſociety, and not only every deſcription of men, but every individual in this country, who feels himſelf aggrieved, may find his way to parliament, and is ſure of an advocate and a friend. In queſtions of general concern, not only the intereſt of the people is conſulted, but their prevailing wiſhes and ſentiments have a due weight, when tempered and corrected by calm and ſober reflection. Parliament will be guided, as it ought, by the ſteady current of public opinion; but it will neither yield to the cry of a miſguided populace, nor ſhift and turn with every guſt of varied paſſions of the day. This it is which diſtinguiſhes the gravity, the conſiſtency, the wiſdom of deliberative bodies, from the levity and inconſiſtency of republican aſſemblies. This forms the great excellence of our conſtitution, and eſtabliſhes the difference between the confuſion and anarchy of wild and turbulent democracies, and the ſettled courſe and order of a free but well-regulated government.

If we proceed to examine the details of our ſituation, we trace every where the natural effects of a ſteady and regular ſyſtem.

Look firſt at the means of national defence, one of the primary ends of all political ſociety. Our navy, the natural bulwark of a commercial country, and to which we chiefly owe our pre-eminence among the nations of Europe, was never in ſo flouriſhing or formidable a condition; our military eſtabliſhment, ſmall in time of peace, contains, nevertheleſs, the foundation of a force ſufficient, in caſe of emergency, to repel and reſent the attacks of our enemies: our officers and ſoldiers are equally diſtinguiſhed for their valour, their fidelity, and their diſcipline; they have a com-

mon intereſt with ourſelves, and feel no attachment but to their ſovereign and the laws. Conſider the ſtate of the eſtabliſhed church, and you will find it to be maintained and ſupported on principles of moderation: power and truſt are confined, as they muſt neceſſarily be, to thoſe who join in the national religion; but at the ſame time, a free toleration is granted to every different ſect of Chriſtians, and the rights of private opinion and liberty of conſcience are held as ſacred and inviolate. Obſerve the progreſs of national wealth; the load of public debt, by a wiſe and œconomical ſyſtem, is continually decreaſing; the revenue is augmented, not by new taxes, but by the effects of general proſperity; ſome of the heavieſt burthens, which irreſiſtible neceſſity had impoſed upon us, are already diminiſhed, and every year of tranquillity will afford us an increaſing relief. Even at preſent, how little have the public taxes interfered with induſtry or trade! Within a few years our commerce is nearly doubled, and is ſtill rapidly increaſing; while our ſhips convey the produce of our united ſkill and labour to every part of the globe where the winds can waft and the waves can bear them. The confirmed and advancing ſtate of our credit, the increaſing facility of circulation, the extent, the variety, and the perfection of our manufactures, are the aſtoniſhment, the admiration, and the envy of the world.

In this happy ſituation, the mild ſyſtem of our laws, and the impartial adminiſtration of juſtice, ſecure to every man, according to the ſtation he occupies, his full ſhare in the general proſperity, and equally protect the rights, the fortunes, and the intereſts of the higheſt and loweſt among us.

If this is a true picture of our actual ſituation; if theſe are the effects of our exiſting conſtitution and form of government, ſupported as it is by a general love of order, a juſt ſenſe of our preſent advantage, and an habitual ſubmiſſion to our eſtabliſhed laws; what will you think of thoſe

men,

men, who, in the form of ſober reaſoning, with the appearance of diſpaſſionate inquiry, and in the language of temperate patriotiſm, endeavour to undermine thoſe principles of ſubordination, which at once form and ſecure the national happineſs? Theſe men are far more dangerous than thoſe I have before mentioned, becauſe they make their approaches in the ſeducing form of public virtue; their aſſociations are made without tumult, and their addreſſes to the people recommend moderation; and contain, for the purpoſe of diſguiſing their intentions, ſome maxims of ſound political doctrine, and breathe a patriotic attachment to the conſtitution of their country: they profeſs to amend, and not to deſtroy; to renovate, and not to injure. Their public reſolutions, which are diſſeminated by newſpapers, handbills, and pamphlets, through every part of the kingdom, are always formed upon certain general principles and abſtract propoſitions, of which ſome may be true, and others may have a ſpecious appearance; but it will be diſcovered, on examination, that when the principles are well-founded, their application is erroneous, and that the reſult is neither conſiſtent with any practical notion of government, nor with the peace and order of ſociety.

As their opinions point to the redreſs of evils which will ariſe in the beſt conſtituted governments, and thoſe political defects which, from the incidental imperfection of all human inſtitutions, muſt be found in the beſt regulated ſtates, they are felt by all, though underſtood by few; and, therefore, by repreſenting theſe evils as produced by the acquired defects of government, and not by its inevitable imperfections ariſing out of the general nature of human affairs, an undiſtinguiſhed ſpirit of diſcontent may be raiſed, and being artfully fomented, may prove a powerful engine to promote the views of theſe factious aſſociations.

To the whole courſe of reaſoning of which I have now been

been ſpeaking, I anſwer at once, that theory is one thing, and that practice is another; that many things which appear excellent in theory, cannot be reduced to practice; and that it requires a conſiderable ſhare of underſtanding, and the habits of experience, to determine between the one and the other. There is no doubt but a perfect ſyſtem of laws and government may be conceived; but to be perfect in their application and effects, they muſt be put in execution by beings of a ſuperior nature to man. We are very fallible creatures, as the firſt and beſt of us know; and the ſociety which we compoſe muſt partake of our imperfections: and, therefore, before we venture to become diſcontented with the government under which we live, becauſe it is not abſolutely pure and perfect, it would be a proof of our wiſdom, to conſider how far we ourſelves, who propoſe to correct its errors, and improve its energies, are in poſſeſſion of purity and perfection. While men are men, the inſtitutions they form will be liable to error and perverſion. Even SOLON himſelf, whom hiſtory records as pre-eminent for political wiſdom and integrity, when he formed a code of laws for the Athenians, did not aim at impracticable perfection; he acted from the ſuggeſtions of practical ſagacity, and not according to the fanciful principles of inapplicable theory; in ſhort, he acted upon a knowledge and experience of human nature; and he provided ſuch laws as were beſt calculated for the people whom they were to govern and protect; or, to uſe his own expreſſion, "the beſt laws which they were ca-
"pable of receiving."

The ſtudent in phyſic, when he has, by long and patient application, made himſelf maſter of his ſcience, comes forward with a theory which no one can controvert; he gives his general hiſtory of human diſeaſes with the moſt ſcientific accuracy; the powers of medicine then ſucceed, and, according to his ſyſtem, every infirmity of the human body ſeems

to

to be provided with an adequate and effectual remedy: nay, as you liſten to his diſcourſe, you begin almoſt to be perſuaded that he poſſeſſes the means of vanquiſhing all diſeaſe, and prolonging life to a patriarchal duration. But his mode of reaſoning is preciſely that of every man, on every ſubject of human life, who derives his knowledge from the books in his cloſet, inſtead of the more inſtructive volume of experience; and, with all his fine and ſeducing theory, if he did not learn by practice and obſervation to adapt its application to the various nature and ſhape of human diſorders, he would, inſtead of curing his patients, have no other merit than that of killing them according to art and ſyſtem.

Theſe ſocieties of reforming politicians may produce ſimilar evils to the ſtate, if the good ſenſe of my countrymen does not counteract the folly and the miſchief of liſtening to their projects. They have their plauſible theories—they have their never-failing elixirs for the cure of national infirmities. They boaſt of their renovating power; and, if you will but truſt to them, the Britiſh Conſtitution ſhall, like the ſnake, throw off its ſlough, and come forth in all its primitive ſtrength and beauty.

Without repeating the motives of ſuch men, I ſhall briefly conſider their theories, and endeavour to explain to you, how far they are capable of being applied to the circumſtances of the Britiſh nation and government.

You have, no doubt, heard much of late about the Rights of Man, and are, perhaps, acquainted with the arguments promulgated, with no common art, to perſuade Engliſhmen that they do not enjoy any of them. This doctrine of the rights of man is ſupported on the principle, that all men are equal by nature, and that no one claſs has a real claim to privileges which are not the common poſſeſſion of all.

That all men are, in ſome reſpects, equal by nature, cannot be denied; they all come into the world naked and helpleſs;

helpleſs; they all cling to the breaſt for ſuſtenance; and, after paſſing through the portion of life which the univerſal Parent has allotted them, they retire to the common home which Nature has prepared for all her children. But in the interval, from the cradle to the grave, ſocial life forbids this equality. The ſtrong and the feeble are not equal—the wiſe and the ignorant are not equal. The difference in corporeal ſtrength and intellectual faculties, which are inequalities produced by Nature herſelf, are as abſolute exceptions to this principle, as the artificial variations which neceſſarily ariſe from a ſtate of ſociety. We cannot be all maſters or all ſervants; wealth will be the lot of ſome, and labour and poverty of others. Thoſe diſtinctions will ariſe from the unconquerable nature of things, which promote the union and form the ſecurity of ſocial life. The firſt, and primitive relations from which thoſe forms and eſtabliſhments are derived by which ſociety is preſerved, that of parent and child, produce at once the power of command and the duty of obedience.

That a ſociety could be formed where all rights and all privileges ſhould be reciprocal, is not within the reach of my reaſon to comprehend; at leaſt, of this I am ſure, that if theſe preachers of the levelling doctrine of equality had the power to reduce their equalizing principles to practice, they muſt follow up their deſtruction of all the old forms of government, by proſcribing, from their political ſyſtem, not only the arts and ſciences, but all trade, manufacture, and commerce.—Whatever promotes an exertion of the intellectual faculties, whatever encourages a ſpirit of enterprize, whatever tends to the acquiſition of fortune or of fame, muſt be forbidden by their confined legiſlation. Thoſe who live under ſuch a government muſt be all rulers and ſubjects, teachers and pupils, maſters and ſervants, judges and executioners, in their turn.

If

If theſe are the rights of man, I am ready to admit, that our conſtitution is formed on no ſuch baſis; but I may venture to aſſert, what indeed, it appears to me, I have already proved, that there is no one right which a reaſonable man would wiſh to enjoy, that you do not poſſeſs under the exiſting government of your country.—You have every right but the right of doing wrong.—I ſpeak, always, with the reſerve of human imperfection, but, appealing to the deſcription which I have before given of your ſituation, and which I call on yourſelves to witneſs;—let me aſk you, if you are not governed by wiſe laws—if you do not enjoy the property tranſmitted to you from your anceſtors, or acquired by your own ſkill and induſtry, in perfect ſecurity? Have you not the privilege of a trial by jury? Is there any power that can rightfully oppreſs you? and againſt which the laws do not provide an effectual remedy? Do not you ſit beneath your own vines and your own fig-trees, and enjoy yourſelves and your poſſeſſions in peace? Do you not worſhip God in your own way, and according to the forms which the ſpirit of your devotion ſhall preſcribe? It is by loſing ſight of theſe bleſſings, and by aiming at the chimerical objects which are now held out by our wild reformers, that the French nation have brought themſelves to a condition which excites the wonder and the pity of Europe.

Such are the general rights which every Britiſh ſubject poſſeſſes: every man, be he a duke or a peaſant, equally feels the influence of the laws and the protection of government. But ſociety requires different degrees and claſſes of men, and each member of it poſſeſſes the individual right of his reſpective ſituation, and it is by a coalition of the ſeveral parts, in their various ſubordinations, that order and harmony is produced, which forms the happineſs of the whole.

The different members of the body are made for different functions, but it is the co-operation of all, in the respective discharge of them, that gives energy, effect, and, indeed, life to the system.

Now we will suppose, by way of argument, that the feet should say to the body, we have borne you for many, many years, and have sometimes been lame and wounded, and continually suffered fatigue and weariness in your service; and though we are ready to acknowledge, that we have always been well clad, and nursed, and nourished, in your service, yet we wish to change our condition, and transfer it to some other of your members, and must beg of you, therefore, in future, to walk upon your hands or your head. Such an idea, no doubt, must appear ridiculous in the extreme; yet it is not more so than when the lower orders of society rise up, in tumult and disorder, to take the place of the higher ones. They may, indeed, for a short time, indulge in plunder, rapine, and glut themselves with intemperance, but it will soon end in their own and the general ruin. It really astonishes me, who have lived all my life among manufacturers, that any thing like a levelling and equalizing spirit should have got the least footing in any of our manufacturing towns; because I conceive it to be essential to their progress and existence, that the rich inhabitants should be few, and the labourers many; and that the subordination of the different classes, to each other, is the life and soul of every species of manufactory. By way of example, let me suppose, for a moment, that the working manufacturers of Manchester or Birmingham should be so far inflamed by these new-fangled doctrines of the rights of man, as to say to their masters, we have toiled for you long enough, you shall now toil for us:—It is by our skill and industry that you are become rich, we will, therefore, have our rightful share of the wealth acquired by our means. Of such an o-

peration

peration of the rights of man, what would be the conſequence?—Ruin to all—to the rich, who would be deſpoiled of their property, and to the poor, who would, thereby, loſe every means of future maintenance and ſupport. Indeed it appears to me, that, in places particularly devoted to trade, manufactures, and commerce, there can be no evil ſo much to be dreaded as popular commotions. A foreign enemy would repay ſubmiſſion with clemency:—fire may be checked in its progreſs—but who ſhall ſay to the mad ſpirit of popular tumult, thus far ſhalt thou go, and no farther?

This may all be very true,—ſay the wiſe and worthy advocates for reforming your political condition; but, then, there are very great defects in your government, that call for immediate reformation.—The King, ſay they, has too much power, and the Houſe of Lords is devoted to ſupport it; while the Houſe of Commons, whoſe duty it is to oppoſe and diminiſh it, does not compoſe an adequate, independent repreſentation of the people, and is ſubject to the very influence of the Crown which it ought to correct; ſo that every privilege you poſſeſs, and all the bleſſings you boaſt of, are at the mercy of the Sovereign.

Whether there are any defects in our Government, and whether, in ſome of its arrangements, there may not be room for amendment, I think it ſcarce neceſſary to inquire. If it can ever be really improved at all, which (conſidering the happineſs we now enjoy) is, I think, a very doubtful queſtion—the improvement can only be obtained by the moſt temperate meaſures. At all events, I would rather bear with the defects of our Government, whatever they may be, while we derive ſo many practical advantages from it, than truſt the removal of them to the meddling ſpirit, the reſtleſs ambition, and factious intereſts of tavern clubs

and ſocieties, by whatever name they may chuſe to diſtinguiſh themſelves.

As for the King, he is the father of his people; and has neither the inclination, nor the power, as it would be in direct oppoſition to his beſt intereſts, to deprive them of the leaſt of the many bleſſings which they enjoy. He feels, both as a man and a ſovereign, that their happineſs muſt be his happineſs—that their proſperity muſt be his proſperity—that their glory muſt be his glory—that the loyalty of the people is the firmeſt ſupport of his Throne, and their affection, the brighteſt jewel of his Crown.

It may be true that, according to ſtrict, arithmetical calculation, the nation at large is not repreſented in a fixed, accurate proportion between the numbers in different diſtricts; but in effect, has any part of the country, whether immediately repreſented or not, any cauſe to complain of a want of parliamentary ſervice:—and though Mancheſter, Birmingham, and other conſiderable towns, have no actual repreſentatives in Parliament, is there a Member of the Houſe of Commons who would not be proud to tranſact their parliamentary buſineſs? I muſt, indeed, repeat my opinion, that our repreſentation, in its preſent ſtate, is perfectly adequate to all the purpoſes for which a repreſentation of the people can be deſired: at all events, any change in it ſhould proceed from the moſt mature and temperate deliberation; and while notions are agitated, ſubverſive of all government, it is not a ſeaſon in which thoſe temperate reforms, which might, perhaps, at other times be practicable, could ſafely or prudently be attempted. I am alſo apprehenſive, that the charge of corruption, which is made againſt the Houſe of Commons by the reforming ſocieties, might be made, with equal juſtice, againſt a very great part of the Electors themſelves; and that this evil would be more likely to be increaſed

creaſed than to be remedied, by moſt, if not all, of the various plans of reform which have been projected.

We live, it is true, in an age of luxury—but luxury is the certain aſſociate of wealth; and however, in a moral or a religious view, it may be an object of ſerious concern, the trader and manufacturer, at leaſt, will be diſpoſed to conſider with complacency, the ſource of ſo much benefit and advantage to themſelves.

Whatever, therefore, may be the pretexts uſed to make you diſſatisfied with your condition, your own experience tells you every day, that the Conſtitution you live under is, in its preſent ſtate, a glorious Conſtitution. You are now, my Countrymen, the moſt proſperous people in the world—and it becomes you to be proud of your allotment. You muſt, ſurely, conſult your reaſon as little as your piety, if you look, in this world, for bleſſings pure and unmixed. It is not in the nature of things—it is not in the order of Providence, for man to poſſeſs them. Be thankful, therefore, for the ſuperior good you enjoy—repine not at the evils which human wiſdom cannot prevent;—and be aſſured that thoſe reformers, who tell you that your Government is not perfect, have, in fact, any views rather than thoſe of making it ſo. Be not ſo weak or ſo ungrateful, as to ſuffer wicked and deſigning men to inflame you into diſcontent—and ſpare not your beſt exertions to check the ſpirit of it in others. Treat the buſy, meddling, ſeditious zeal of reforming aſſociations with the contempt they deſerve; purſue the honeſt and induſtrious occupations from which you, and your families, have derived ſuch conſtant advantages, and avail yourſelves of the preſent tranquillity to improve your own and the public proſperity.

In a word—recollect the well-known ſtory, as it is given in the Spectator, of a man, who, though he was in a ſtate of perfect health, ſuffered himſelf to be perſuaded by empirics

and

and mountebanks, that he would be ſtill better if he doſed himſelf with their noſtrums :—the conſequence was, as might be naturally expected, that he ſoon ruined his health, and brought on a decline, which carried him to the grave. As an acknowledgement of his folly, and as a warning to others, he ordered the following epitaph to be inſcribed on his tomb.——" I was well—I endeavoured to be better—and " here I lie."

That you may all of you poſſeſs the wiſdom to avoid a ſimilar conduct,—that your trade, manufactures, and commerce may continue to flouriſh,—that the free conſtitution and ſuperior happineſs of our country may remain undiſturbed by foreign foes or domeſtic enemies, is the ardent wiſh of

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